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# Sacramento man charged with mailing pipe bomb

Attempted murder charges were filed against a Sacramento man yesterday by Oakland police, who said he mailed a pipe bomb to his estranged wife that failed to go off.

The suspect, Daniel Lee Davis, 47, a self-employed wood craftsman who has been in custody since Friday, is scheduled to enter a plea today in Oakland Municipal Court. He is charged with attempted murder and attempted explosion of a destructive device with the intent to commit murder and is being held without bail.

Oakland police, working with postal inspectors, began their investigation last Tuesday night when Florence Davis, 46, discovered a package in front of her apartment door in the 300 block of Staten Avenue that bore a Sacramento postmark.

Police said she and her husband had been married more than 20 years before separating almost three years ago. The divorce proceedings had been at times bitter, police said.

Sgt. Jim Hahn said that when Mrs. Davis opened the package she found a pipe bomb and immediately called police.

Hahn said the Alameda County sheriff's bomb squad was summoned and Sheriff's Lt. Dean Hess and Deputy T.J. Rounph disarmed the device.

The device consisted of a length of pipe filled with gunpowder and powered by two batteries, officers said. It was designed to explode upon opening of the package. But Hahn said it failed to detonate because a wire had come loose.

Had it exploded, Hahn said, "It was powerful enough to kill (Mrs. Davis) and possibly the people in the adjacent apartments."

After interviewing Mrs. Davis, police got enough evidence to obtain search warrants.

Hahn said that Mrs. Davis, a state employee, had moved to Oakland from Sacramento a year ago to get away from her husband.

# Bomb letter likely a fake, experts say

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By Paul Grabowicz  
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The Tribune

The "Lord's Avenger" letter, the strongest lead police have left in the May bombing of an Earth First activist's car in Oakland, was probably concocted to trick police into believing the bomber was a deranged religious fanatic, according to experts contacted by The Tribune.

Authorities believe the avenger, who took credit for the bombing in an anonymous letter to the media, was so familiar with the bomb that he must have been involved in building it.

More than 15 psychologists, religious scholars and criminologists who read the avenger's letter at The Tribune's request said he also is intelligent, well-educated and as familiar with Christian beliefs as he is with the intricate schematics of a bomb.

But the letter misuses some fundamentalist ideas, indicating the religious claims are only a cover, experts said.

"It looks like a Frankenstein monster. It seems like it's been put together and manufactured," said the Rev. Lou Sheldon, leader of the fundamentalist Traditional Values Coalition based in Anaheim.

"This has obviously been constructed to give an impression of a deranged religious fanatic," said Richard Ofshe, professor of sociology at the University of California at Berkeley and a consultant to law enforcement agencies on violent cults.

The avenger letter is one of the few clues police and the FBI have after a nearly four-month-long probe of the May 24 bomb-

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ing, which injured Earth First activists Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney. The two were in Oakland to gather support for the Redwood Summer anti-logging campaign along the North Coast that concluded this month.

Authorities have said it is clear the avenger was involved in the bombing, because he provided an accurate and detailed description of the bomb. The FBI is examining the letter for clues to the writer's identity.

Authorities speculate the avenger may be affiliated with Earth First and made up the letter to divert attention from Bari and Cherney, who police suspected were transporting the bomb when it accidentally exploded. But no charges have been filed against the pair and police have uncovered no significant evidence against them.

Many Earth First activists also doubt the letter's authenticity, saying it was written by a logger or law enforcement official to cover up their responsibility for the bomb.

In the single-spaced, three-page letter written on a manual typewriter, the avenger claims he targeted Bari because pro-abortion statements she made showed she was "possessed of the devil" and her worship of trees was "paganism."

The avenger claims God told him to plant the Oakland bomb, while the devil suggested he bomb a Cloverdale lumber office on May 9 and make it appear Bari did it.

The letter is sprinkled with biblical citations and religious allusions and contains many capitalized words but little punctuation.

"I believe the Lord's Avenger letter is too much a caricature of

fundamentalist Christians to be authentic," said Michael D. Imfeld, a Sacramento attorney and a board member of Berkeley's Spiritual Counterfeits Project, which exposes religious sham.

"The religious right always talks like that. It's easy to imitate," said Kass McMahon of the Bay Area Coalition Against Operation Rescue, which has studied the diction of pro-life groups. "You throw in God and a little insanity and you can sound like that."

Some experts said they could not entirely dismiss the possibility the letter is authentic, however, and a few said they think it is genuine.

"I would not suggest for people to take this lightly," said Talib Haq, a criminology professor at California State University at Sacramento. "You're looking at a time bomb who could go off any time."

Ronald Enroth, professor of sociology at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, pointed out that the avenger shares with many fundamentalists a concern that some environmentalists are practicing "paganism" by worshipping "Mother Earth" rather than a paternal God.

"The ultrafundamentalist would be very upset with the woman who is into this worst form of shamanistic, animistic or paganistic religion, this worshipping of trees," said Enroth, a specialist in new religious groups.

But others said such ideas could be gleaned by someone who had closely observed fundamentalists or worked with anti-fundamentalist groups.

"He could possibly be in a Christian group, but on the fringes of it," Sheldon said. "He's had some experience either by listening to people in church, on the radio or on TV."

Those who question the authenticity of the letter point to

several misuses of fundamentalist ideas.

The avenger calls Bari a "demon," but Christians do not believe that human beings are demons. The avenger also makes no mention of Jesus Christ, which is extremely unusual for a supposed fundamentalist, religious experts said.

"There are 50 things wrong" with the letter for it to be written by a true evangelical Christian, said Sara Diamond, author of a book on fundamentalism. "It's as if you were fluent in Spanish and someone handed you something in Portuguese passed off as Spanish."

The avenger also misused the jargon of the anti-abortion movement. He referred to a "baby-killing clinic," while pro-life activists are more likely to call the facility an "abortuary" or "death place," veterans of the abortion debate said.

Others said they were struck by the sudden change in the letter's tone when the avenger detailed the bombs he made.

"This deranged religious fanatic is suddenly able to sound like an engineer describing the device, and the capitalization (of words) suddenly disappears, suggesting (it) is put in there to give the impression of being disturbed," Ofshe said.

The writer sounds severely disturbed, but someone this crazy would stand out and most likely have been caught by now, said Harvey Schlossberg, a clinical psychologist who was the New York City Police Department's director of psychology and worked on the "Son of Sam" case.

"He's so far out he couldn't function, he couldn't hide," Schlossberg said.

Most experts agreed the avenger is intelligent and educated, because the letter is consistent and organized, the grammar and spelling are generally

correct and sophisticated words are used. In the three instances where mistakes are made, experts believe they were deliberate to make it appear the writer was less educated.

"It almost seems as though somebody very intelligent wrote it and tried to put in a few mistakes," said Joseph Busey, a clinical psychologist in San Francisco.

Diamond, who has also studied police intelligence, said the letter is so cleverly written that it could be the work of a police agency "to steer (suspicion) away from who did it."

The avenger also is very familiar with the North Coast area. The letter was postmarked there, and the writer knew about a 1988 Ukiah pro-abortion protest Bari attended and a private May meeting she had with loggers in Willits.

The bombs the avenger described in his letter could have been made using standard manuals and materials available through survivalist publications, according to forensic and other experts.

"He took something like a 'Poor Man's James Bond' or 'The Anarchist's Cookbook' and probably mixed some things up," said Brendan Furnish, professor of sociology at Westmont College, who has studied survivalist and weapons literature extensively.

But one of the bomb's designs also was modified to include sophisticated devices such as a motion-detector triggering mechanism.

"He's got imagination," said Brian Murphy, a retired New York City police officer who now is assistant director of security for the criminology school at City University of New York.

"It's a very risky bomb with a motion booby trap. Most professional terrorists would not make a bomb like that."